

franciscan

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The Millennium Dome, Greenwich

An historical moment?

by Martin Wroe

Martin Wroe surveys millennium attitudes and considers possible responses to the Churches' candle project. He points out that there is another initiative that God has 'slipped in' which 'could change the world for ever . . . which was what the Millennium was started for.'

The Millennium: an historical moment? Well, it is a bit of a one-off. But let's not get carried away. Many of us will not be that bothered. Certainly not for long before or after. Some of us will sleep through it.

Historic moments are two-a-penny in our patch of history, a patch which rarely sees itself as part of an entire patch-work: Berlin Wall down, apartheid over, Tories out, Man United winning the treble, man on moon, baby born in tube, woman celebrating eucharist, princess killed in crash, animals cloned, hereditaries kicked out, the dead frozen . . .

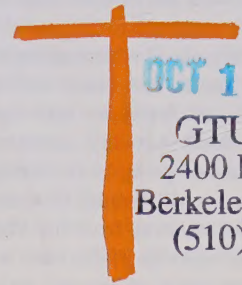
We are up to our contact lenses in history: we have got round-the-clock news, fifteen-minute updates, video-arcade wars, history coming at us from our screens twenty-four hours a day.

But you only get millennia every . . . well, work it out at home. And if it is anything but a millennium is a Christian event, or at

least, it has a Christian connection: it's a moment in time which exists only because of a Christian calendar. It's a reminder that Christianity is history, if you see what I mean. But there's always the chance that the Millennium is not anything (other than computer hell).

The Churches' Millennium Office has decided it is something, something uniquely Christian, and it has plans for everyone in the country to experience the Christian essence of the Millennium Moment. Everyone will receive a Millennium Candle and a card with a Millennium Resolution about respecting the earth and living in peace and starting again and eating your greens (actually, nothing about your greens).

This will be a 'gift from the churches to the whole community', the *Pilgrim Post* – shouldn't that be *E-Mail Epistle*? – the publication of *Churches Together in*



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Faith Zone

Does the flat spread of the Millennium Dome mean inclusivity? It will be fascinating to see what is in the Faith Zone. This *franciscan* seeks insights from a selection of spiritualities: the Navajo Indians ('no word for religion in our lifestyle'), complementary therapies ('tap into universal energy'), the international addiction-recovery programme ('however we name God, we need the higher power'). This is a small but wide selection.

Christian spirituality seems distant to most people around, and maybe particularly to men. Nor is it always obvious in our Churches. There is good news recorded from one parish and our lead article invites us to see ourselves as others see us. Wouldn't it be great if millennium Christians were wide, but not flat, faithful but not exclusive.

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England reassures the understandably worried faithful that, 'The design of the candle has been carried out with the safety factor in mind. . .'. Now there's a symbol in a symbol: the Christian element in the epoch is to be captured by something bright but definitely harmless (can you have a safe fire?; is God snuffed out so easily?).

I suppose what the Churches are doing here is making a statement to 'the world' which is merrily going ahead with marking the sacred date with parties and discos and television and food and fireworks and domes and sleeping around. Actually, one of my friends is talking about going to his cottage in the country for his Millennium Moment. I think he wants to get away from the Millennium. Perhaps he thinks the Millennium is an urban thing, some kind of sample, anyway. He hasn't decided it isn't a Christian moment – he probably thinks it is if you are a Christian. But it is not for him because he is an atheist. He will light a candle – to eat his New Year's Eve dinner by.

The Church wants to emphasize the Christian significance of the Millennium to make sure that if anyone gives it a meaning, it should be the company of origin. When I was younger, I would get very excited at news of someone culturally significant – say Bob Dylan – announcing he was following Jesus. I'm still chuffed when reading a novel to discover subliminal Christian themes. When you believe something to be true – and yet your fellow believers, lovely lot that they are, seem to represent a beleaguered, antiquated, diminishing community who appear incredible to the majority – it is a tonic when a cultural icon comes off the bench and joins your team. He'll score, just watch, that'll show the world, we'll beat them yet!

Something like this is happening with the Millennium. The Church has found an 'historic', unmissable, culturally universal event which it can legitimately brand

'Christian'. It's ours! Copyright God! If you want to use it properly, you'd better use it like us. Any other uses – parties, etc. – are, unfortunately, a form of piracy.

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Culture Secretary – and Christian – Chris Smith, endorses the Millennium Candle as a 'symbolic gift from Christian communities throughout the country to mark the anniversary of the birth of Christ.' But is the signal that the symbol is supposed to send the same signal that our third Millennium AD public will receive? Back to my Exit Poll. I asked another friend, a hard-nosed, allegedly unreligious quality-newspaper journalist, what he thought of getting a candle through the door and a prayer from the Church. 'It would depend on the pre-publicity', he said. If he knew what it was about, he might well light the candle – 'not for reasons of religious belief, but because I think that what's happening to the Millennium is coarse and commercial, it would be a sort of protest candle.' But he won't be saying the prayer or resolution and he won't be sitting down with his partner and reflecting on his life. 'It won't make a great deal of difference to me.'

The symbolic approach to the Millennium is a good one – it doesn't rule out the others, like the hedonistic ones – but at the same time the candle is a symbol many people won't read. The same is true of the watered-down prayer posing as a 'resolution'. It feels a bit too New Labour, something that looks more like spin than substance.

If the Church is struggling to varnish the Millennium with a coat of meaning, the politicians are struggling too. In a culture largely uninterested in the Christian story other millennial meanings are being offered. Where the Church throws God at the problem, the great and good throw money at it.

Like many of the celebrations planned, the Millennium Dome was conceived as something big, bigger, biggest. It suffers from the problem of attempting to represent a so-called date with destiny by resorting to size. In the absence of a potent symbol to mark the Year 2000, we resort to the colossal. As the preacher is reputed to have written in the notes of his sermon: 'Argument weak here, shout.' I know you're

bored with hearing this again but apparently, after the first millennium, there was a 'flowering' of great cathedrals in Europe. The Dome is a kind of secular cathedral, big enough for a big idea to live in, even though no-one agrees whether a big idea exists anymore. And of course in a pre-modern, vertically-inclined era, cathedrals would point to the sky; while in our horizontal time, the surface of the Dome searches far and wide but nowhere has a particular point.

If the British Government can throw money at the absence of millennial meaning, the French, in contrast, can be ironic. They are marking the moment by getting the Eiffel Tower to lay an enormous, luminous egg on New Year's Eve. It will crack open to reveal hundreds of television screens relaying images of millennial festivities from around the world. That's a patent symbol – if an unintentional one – of many of the Millennium celebrations we read about. In the absence of a meaningful understanding of the epoch, we resort to filming everyone else's meaningless interpretations. Substance through style. *Voila!*

By comparison, the Churches' candle and resolution and squabbles over pre-eminence in the Faith Zone, can seem a little desperate, scrabbling round for an argument to prove my Millennium is more meaningful than yours – but looking instead, just a lot cheaper.

The candle is a low-key, unthreatening, slightly-embarrassed English approach for the Christian community to try and engage with people who they take not to be Christian – in a buttock-clenching, leg-crossing, teeth-grating sort of way. I don't think I could give a candle and the Millennium Resolution to friends, I'd rather go to the Dome with them.

It is in relationships of trust and respect that someone finds themselves having doubts about their unbelief, wondering if they are as apathetic about their sense of ennui as they used to be, accidentally waking up to find they are on the side of Jesus, when before they were on the side of not really thinking about it too much at all.

It is a sign of the Church's lack of internal connectedness that it is still struggling to come up with Christian significances for the Millennium when it has already invented by far the most potent.

The Jubilee 2000 campaign to cancel unpayable debts of poor countries and liberate a billion people from economic slavery was slipped to some Christians by God when no-one else was listening. Now here's a bonfire, not a candle, and the flames are being fanned. It's a Christian inspired campaign that people of all faiths and none can join with. It could change the world for ever, which is what the Millennium was started for.

Funnily enough, my journalist friend spotted this: 'It's what old lefties like me call a campaign by the Christian front; admirable,' he laughed, 'I like it . . .'



Martin Wroe is a freelance journalist, long employed by The Observer on culture and religion. Until recently, he was Chairman of the Greenbelt Festival.

In beauty we walk

The spirituality of the Navajo Indians

by Sister Pamela Clare CSF

The cool, desert night-air is permeated with the sweet smell of a juniper and pinyon pine bonfire blazing high in the darkness. The rhythmic sound of dance-rattles can be heard. Soon a line of masked dancers appears, following a trail of sacred corn pollen.

The high desert plateaux and deep, red-dotted canyons bounded by the holy mountains in northern Arizona and New Mexico form the sacred homeland of the Navajo Indians. Native American languages do not have a word for 'religion' because their religion, their spirituality, is inseparable from, and completely integrated into, their life. The Indians speak of the Navajo Way, or the path marked with sacred corn (maize) pollen.

The focus of Navajo ritual is on health and well-being. The Navajo were originally hunters and gatherers before they learned to farm and later to herd sheep. A sick hunter is likely to be a dead hunter. So health was understandably important. The Navajo today use modern Western medicine for healing wounds and illness, but turn to traditional Navajo religion for the cure. For the Navajo, having a broken leg set or receiving chemotherapy treatments for cancer is merely treating the symptoms. The cure must involve more fundamental questions.

Sings are performed for specific persons who have been diagnosed with a spiritual malaise, but all participants in the Sing feel its good effects. There is no special building set aside for ritual. Religion is not separated out from daily life.

At the heart of the Navajo Way is the concept of harmony, the need to be in right relationship. This concept is often translated as 'Beauty' in English. The proper state of the universe is harmony, balance, and equilibrium. Opposites are always present: bad/good, male/female, Mother Earth/Father Sky. These opposites complement each other and are needed for equilibrium. When everything is in harmony, there is good. When things get out of kilter, there is evil. So when illness or bad luck strike, there is some underlying disharmony which must be brought to right.

Navajo curing rituals are called Sings. Sings are learned by Singers and passed on through a long apprenticeship.

The focus of Navajo ritual is on health and well-being.

The Navajo were originally hunters and gatherers before they learned to farm and later to herd sheep.

A sick hunter is likely to be a dead hunter. So health was understandably important.

A Sing may have hundreds of songs, as well as many other things which must be learned perfectly. Each Sing is based on a myth which tells how one of the Yei (divine heroes) became sick or out of harmony in some way and then went through an experience of death and rebirth, which brought about the restoration of health and well-being. The Yeis eventually taught people the proper rituals and these have been handed down since the beginning times.

Sings are performed for specific persons who have been diagnosed with a spiritual malaise, but all participants in the Sing feel its good effects. There is no special building set aside for ritual. Religion is not separated out from daily life. Sings take place inside the house. The house itself is sacred, a microcosm of the cosmos and, therefore, holy. The roof is like Father Sky, the walls are like the sacred mountains, and the floor is ever in touch with Mother Earth.

Typically, Sings last nine days. The first four days are devoted to purification through sweat baths and fasting. On the fifth day, an altar is made inside the house. The Singer makes different sandpaintings on each of the last four days. Sandpaintings are complicated depictions of the mythological story which forms the basis of the Sing. They are made on the earthen floor of the house using powdered vegetable and mineral pigments and measure eight to ten feet on a side. The paintings are always open towards

the east so that the Yeis can enter. The patient sits on the completed painting and the Singer blesses the person with sacred corn pollen and rubs material from the sacred figures in the sandpainting on parts of the patient's body in a ritual of identification. The sand absorbs evil influence and, at the end of the ritual, the sandpainting is rubbed out and the remains buried ceremonially. By repetition in song, prayer, painting, and myth, the identification of the patient is made with the mythical hero. This puts the patient into a psychologically-receptive mood. Central to the power of the Sing to provide a cure is in this identification of the Yeis with the patient.

Each night is devoted to singing and the last night is a vigil when dancers masked and costumed as Yeis come to dance. The men and women who dance are not masquerading as Yeis. They consider that when they put on the sacred masks, they lose their own identity and become the Yei spirits. The Sing ends with the patient renewed in spiritual health, all the visitors well-fed and basking in the general well-being produced by the ritual, and the harmony of the cosmos once more restored. ■

*In Beauty may I walk.
All day long may I walk.
Through the returning seasons may I walk.
On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.
With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk.
With dew about my feet may I walk.
With Beauty may I walk.
With Beauty before me, may I walk.
With Beauty behind me, may I walk.
With Beauty above me, may I walk.
With Beauty below me, may I walk.
With Beauty all around me, may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of Beauty,
lively, may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of Beauty,
living again, may I walk.
It is finished in Beauty.
It is finished in Beauty.*

A Navajo Prayer



Sister Pamela Clare lives in San Francisco and is the Minister Provincial of CSF in the American Province.

Theme Prayer

The Living Spirit

Living God,
You called us out of our separate and
separated flowerpots
to bloom together in the multicoloured
glory of your herbaceous border.

Blessing you for your gifts of difference
and colour

we pray:

Colour us red, passionate God,
for the anger of the oppressed,
for those who hunger and thirst
for justice and peace,
for our mothers and grandmothers
and all who labour to give birth
to love.

Colour us yellow, resurrection God,
for the achievements of the decade,
for those who light up our lives,
for all who dwell in the shadows of
death and long for the morning.

Colour us green, creator God
for the integrity of creation,
for seeds planted this weekend and
leaves for the healing of the
churches and nations,
for all who need a new way forward
to grow.

Colour us blue, incarnate God,
for all who weep,
for faith to walk and even dance
upon the water,
for all who need heaven to be torn
open that they may hear God's
affirming word: you are my
daughter, my son, whom I love.

Colour us purple, Holy God,
for those whose needs and gifts are
ignored, overlooked, rejected,
for the silenced who need a voice
and the powerful who need to listen,
for imagination and wisdom.

Colour us your rainbow people of hope.
Deep loving God,
lead us forward to your promised
community
through Jesus Christ, your beloved
and ours.
Amen.

Catherine A Hepburn



African Christians

by Brother Nolan Tobias SSF

I am conscious, as I reflect on the contribution that African Christians can offer the western world, that Africa is so often perceived by the media as the 'lost continent', a continent overrun by countless problems: such as terrible and debilitating poverty, the tragic mismanagement of a few available resources, corruption, political instability and social chaos, unemployment, international debt, refugee problems, Aids, tribalism and ethnic conflict, the arms' trade . . . The list is endless.

But as I reflect on my experience of living in a Europe that is becoming more and more secular, I am concerned for the rugged individualism that is prevalent in a very competitive society. I am conscious as I meet people in their different contexts of their feeling profoundly unloved, lonely, unaffirmed and isolated. There are those who cling to the ideals of individualism, independence and self-sufficiency and there are the many who yearn for a sense of community and for a space where it is safe to be loved and affirmed by those who are trustworthy.

Within my context and experience, there is a concept that is very much used in sub-Saharan Africa. There is an understanding of a fundamental African concept known as *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is a term very much in vogue in the new South Africa. Its central concern is that human beings have worth in any society. *Ubuntu* is an Nguni word which has at its heart the experience of humanness. It is the thread that runs through people's relationships with family members, neighbours and strangers. In African thought, there is the emphasis on the fact that an individual exists in community. There is a Xhosa proverb that states that *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which means that a person is a person through other persons. In Sotho there is an expression:

Motho ke motho ka batho, which endorses the idea that a human being is a human being with, by and for other human beings. John Pobee, that well-known African theologian, claims 'It is often said that where Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am', the African would say, 'I am related, therefore we are'.'

In conclusion, I believe that *ubuntu* is fundamental to the African understanding of life, but it is sustained by people living in community, in groups and families. I believe that human beings can find their true fulfilment in relationship and not in pursuing selfish individual interests. Human beings profoundly need one another. Human beings are interdependent. *Ubuntu* endorses the fact that my humanity is caught up in your humanity.

This is what I believe African Christianity has to offer the whole world. This is what we have to offer fragmented societies. The world is yearning for those who are able to say, 'I am, therefore we are'. A person is a person though other persons belonging to one family, the human family, God's family, on which the Christian principle of *koinonia* is based. ■

Brother Nolan Tobias SSF

Nolan was featured in the last issue photographed after receiving his diploma at Edinburgh University for a Master's Degree in Theology.



Joyce Yarrow CSF

Following her life profession, Sister Jennie CSF chats with Michael Scott-Joynt, Bishop of Winchester and Protector of SSF in the European Province.



Complementary Therapies

by Jo Smith Oliver

Although I make my communion and try to pray and meditate, I know little about the Bible, theology or philosophy. As a chartered physiotherapist I have a reasonable knowledge of bodies and of how the different parts interact between themselves and also with the world around. Since qualifying in 1978 I have had the opportunity to work with a very well-known and gifted orthopaedic physician treating aches and pains 'hands on.' Little did I know that, successful as it is, it only touches the tip of the iceberg.

Having now trained in a complementary therapy I begin to find new joy in science and spirituality meeting happily. Reflexotherapy is a form of treatment where the body is represented as a microcosm in the feet, hands and other areas, and connections between all body systems and the environment are respected. Physical health can be restored with massage applied to the feet and hands, which adopts similar theories to reflexology, but it is only practised by health care professionals and the application is very different.

In learning more about this I have had to discipline myself to let go of the pursuit of knowledge alone and to trust in a much greater process linking us to each other and to the universe. One of the most interesting concepts covered in the training has been a deeper understanding of energy which affects all things. Every time we have any thoughts, good or bad, happy or sad, chemicals are formed in our brain which affect the energy in our body and influence the world around us.

After centuries of disbelief, following the Age of Enlightenment in the seventeenth century, what the ancient mystics believed before that time has now been proved by quantum physics: in that a profound link is honoured between the mind, body and spirit. Ultimately, the observer (in this case the practitioner) cannot control the final outcome. Complementary medicine embraces these concepts and also the fact that all

tissues hold memories of events in our lifetime for which we are responsible. These can extend back into the womb and even beyond. An uneven balance of energy due to prolonged stress may ultimately give way to pathology producing symptoms such as pain, stiffness, weakness, pins and needles, etc. Prolonged imbalance will give rise to deeper more serious issues and conditions. This can be seen and felt in the body as well as in the feet, hands and ears.

In reflexotherapy, attention is most often focused on the feet. The big toes represent the head and neck. The heels the pelvic area and hip. The inner arches the spine. The soles of the feet represent the lungs, heart and digestive organs. Each foot mirrors the same side of the body. Pressure and simple massage promote healing in a profound and beautiful way that allows symptoms to somehow bubble up to the surface and melt away without having to discuss the issues. The healing properties of foot massage have been known for five thousand years. Was this why Mary Magdalene tended the feet of Jesus?

It is hard to believe that anyone would dispute the energy of the sun: few readers of *franciscan* would question the energy of prayer. We might be more reluctant to accept the presence of an energy in ourselves, and by looking at our own emotions we can sometimes make physical connections. Heat energy is more obvious from food metabolism. All too easily we

forget the gifts of speech, song, and laughter in sound. Light energy with its incredible beauty has been depicted by intuitive artists over the ages showing Jesus and the saints surrounded by aura.

In ancient Hindu tradition energy centres known as *chakras* are located at different points on the body radiating colours. It has now been scientifically proved that a healthy functioning cell will produce light, and many of us see occasional flashes of vibrant or pure white colour in areas immediately surrounding the body. We can all be aware of those who radiate light and long to be around them.

This light is very real and if you *think* you've seen it, you definitely have. The mystery is that it happens when you are not looking for it. We too can create our own light when we radiate love outwards. This surely is a mirror reflecting the glory of the Divine. How beautiful is the world! ■



Jo Smith Oliver is a chartered physiotherapist and reflextherapist and runs a complementary health centre in Hackney, east London. She teaches reflextherapy to qualified health care professionals and would be happy to receive comment. She and her family are well known at the Hilfield Families' Camp.

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The Twelve Steps by Sally Martin

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. We were entirely ready to have God remove our shortcomings.

7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. We made a list of people we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

In 1935, four years after Alcoholics Anonymous was founded, the Twelve Step road to recovery was written down. Built on very sound principles, and addressing the spiritual side of the illness, it is the single, most-effective treatment for alcoholism. *Surrender*, addressed in Step One, is

developed throughout the others. Step Two sees the awakening of faith and hope, and introduces the concept of a Higher Power who can do what we cannot. In Step Three, surrender becomes active towards self-abandonment to the Divine Providence. Herein lies the Programme's wisdom and strength. By not seeking Road to Damascus conversions, it allows us to grow spiritually in our own time and our own way. It is open to people of all – or no – religious persuasion. Step Three involves continual appraisal of life – with gratitude for its gifts and acceptance of the rest. Here begins that search for an understanding of one's own God – not one imposed by others and often long since abandoned. Some start this journey by simply defining God as *Good Orderly Direction*.

Steps Four and Five place value on the *Confessional* and gaining self-knowledge. We are encouraged to identify those defects which prevent us carrying out God's will, but also those assets which help. Honesty and courage are required here, and progress naturally on to willingness to eradicate these blocks (Step Six) followed by action (Step Seven).

Provision is made for *Restitution* of harm done to family and society in Steps Eight and Nine, with the emphasis on the 'doing' and then accepting the outcome.

Throughout Steps One to Nine, relationships with God, self and others are examined and remedied. All that is required from us is willingness – our Higher Power provides the rest of what we need to work

through them if we ask Him.

Steps Ten and Eleven are called the *Maintenance Steps*. Here we adopt a life of constant prayer and meditation in which we may seek God in our own way. This process evolves with practice, and requires an honest evaluation of one's own responsibility and acceptance of a daily need for the gifts of a Higher Power. On a practical level, identifying and dealing with fears, resentments, etc. prevents them from developing into 'demons'.

Step Twelve talks of 'carrying the message' – spreading the Good News that there is help available for the still suffering alcoholic. It is also seen as an act of gratitude – passing on to others the fruits of the gifts that have been received. By working the Twelve Steps great *Changes* take place in us. It leads to a spiritual re-birth and re-building where individuals find a contact and confidence in an all-powerful, all-loving, ever-available Higher Power who liberates them from the need to drink alcohol.

So successful has the AA programme been in helping alcoholics that the Twelve Steps have been adopted by drug, gambling and sex addicts, as well as many others who find themselves trapped and dis-spirited by out-of-control behaviour.

May those who are still suffering find their Higher Power. ■

Sally Martin

Sally is a therapist at the Kairos Community in Camberwell, South London



Men: the Challenge of Change

by James Lawrence

'I'm happy to be a bloke, I think, but sometimes I'm not happy being a bloke in the late twentieth century. Sometimes I'd rather be my dad.'

Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity*

'This is your life!' So proclaimed the bold title of a recent survey in the men's lifestyle magazine *XL*. The responses revealed that by and large their readership are 'happy with their lot.' Yet other articles suggest an alternative perspective on the plight of men in the nineties: 'Men, what are they good for?'; 'Even Mr Right gets it wrong'; 'The trouble with men'; 'Canny lads out to carve a new role'. What is the true picture of men in society today? Are we about to sink or swim?

Past certainties can no longer be taken for

granted. Roles at work have changed and continue to do so. In 1994 forty five per cent of Britain's paid work force was female, compared with thirty seven per cent in 1991 (*Social Focus on Women, Central Statistical Office 1995*). By 2006 the number of women in the UK's workforce will increase by almost eleven per cent, while the number of men will increase by just over two per cent (*Employment Gazette, August 1995*). More and more jobs will be part-time and the majority of these will go to women. So, as companies 'down-size', employees face

an increasingly uncertain future. And because traditional expectations die hard, the emerging world of short-term employment contracts poses more of a challenge to men than women.

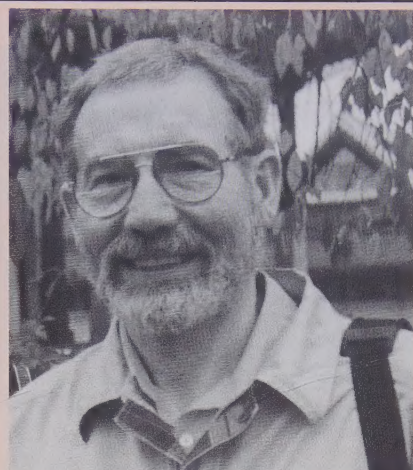
Work roles within the home are also changing, though probably at a slower rate. What is certain, though, is that the traditional roles of woman as homemaker and man as breadwinner are in a state of flux. Within the family, on the one hand a father is generally expected to be more involved with the children than in years gone by. On the other hand, many men are increasingly sidelined from family life as more and more children are born into single parent families; the increase in divorce often isolates men from their children. In some cases, men may simply feel redundant: as one friend of mine said, 'Call me "junk male".'

Some changes have been wholly positive, liberating people from inappropriate

Continued on page seven . . .

Minister's Letter

Brother Daniel SSF,
Minister General of the First Order Brothers
of the Society of Saint Francis, writes:



It is now almost thirty years since I first came to the Solomon Islands. I can remember after my first week here writing to Brother Reginald and saying, 'This is my idea of a South Pacific Paradise. Beautiful golden beaches, waving palms, blue lagoons, coral reefs and happy friendly smiling people.' Sad to say, in a changing world much of this has gone. In particular, in this almost forgotten and hidden part of our beautiful planet, the people are living through what is called *Ethnic Tension*.

Very few people in this cluster of islands speak only one language per island. If a couple from two different islands marry, people call it a mixed marriage. Cultures, languages and lines of inheritance differ. A nation was formed and came to independence twenty-one years ago. Since then, economic development has been slow. Government and administration have been mainly centred on Honiara, the capital, which is situated on the island of Guadalcanal. The Churches have also played a large part in the development of the modern Solomons.

Towards the end of last year, the people of Guadalcanal started to ask – and then force – the Malaitan people to move out of their land and return to Malaita. Many of the Malaitans had settled with their families in the rural areas of Guadalcanal around Honiara. Others form a large part of the labour force of both Honiara and the companies which operate the various development projects around it. This assertion that they have the right to be the only people living and working on Guadalcanal has led to much fear and tension in the people of this Pacific nation.

I do not want to talk about the efforts of the Government, Commonwealth and UN to bring an end to this problem, or those of the police who have exercised a firm but restrained hand in the matter, but rather tell

you about one of the many quiet prayerful efforts to bring freedom from fear and reconciliation in this troubled land.

We have four Anglican Religious Communities working within the Church of Melanesia: the Melanesian Brotherhood, the Society of Saint Francis, the Sisters of the Church, and the Melanesian Sisterhood. A new ministry has developed for our brothers and sisters: they call it 'rescue'. It is very simple: with the unrest, and people being threatened and driven from their homes, many are fleeing as refugees to Honiara and then back to their own islands. Some are stuck without transport and help in the rural areas. I understand some, not many, have died or are missing.

Last week I took part with some brothers and sisters in a 'rescue'. The Religious are some of the few people who seem to be able to move freely. The truck was loaded with stores to be taken to Hautambu; we then had to report to the central police station to get a pass in order to go through the police road block. After the road block, we went on for a little way and then came to the road block on the other side. People waved – not too many smiles as all was being taken very seriously, and a few arms were in evidence. Many were dressed in custom dress, *kabilato*, a small loincloth made from tree bark. They were armed with a couple of guns, bows and arrows and knives.

We passed on along a very quiet road, a big change from the usual traffic. After being stopped a number of times, we unloaded the stores and then headed inland to find the man who was missing, whose parents were afraid for his safety. After a number of false starts and difficult roads, we located the house. Many of the leaf houses in the area had been burnt; many of the possessions of the people who had fled were destroyed. We found out that he and his family had moved to the coast; so, loading some of their

undamaged possessions and digging some cassava from the gardens, we retraced our steps to the coastal village. This was a happy ending: the parents of the man's wife had brought them down for safety to his home. His family were very relieved; another call came later that evening to go out to the other side of Honiara.

A simple story, nothing to compare with other parts of our troubled world, but I was most impressed with the way the Religious Communities had won the confidence and acceptance of both sides. They were prepared to share their food, houses and time without any other thought than working for reconciliation and showing the love and peace of Christ in their daily lives.

We remember such things while the bombs are dropping, or the homes are burning, but the long job of reconciliation and learning once again to accept each other in love takes so much more time. So I commend to your prayers the many displaced people of the world, and those living in fear.

May our God, the God of peace and justice, bless you all.

Daniel SSF

... Continued from page six

restraints and prejudices. Other changes have left people feeling insecure and confused. The fixed roles of the past had certain strengths. Men had a clearer idea of what was expected of them, there was less confusion: they may have had problems, but there was a clearer understanding of the way to deal with them – even if it meant 'grin and bear it'. Whenever expectations change, uncertainty and conflict usually follow close behind.

It is indicative of a time of transition that today's men are receiving mixed messages about what it means to be a man. The voice of traditional expectations says 'You're a man, so be strong, physically and emotionally. Be aggressive. Don't admit to weakness or vulnerability. Remember, real men don't cry.' Meanwhile a newer, and increasingly insistent, voice sets a very different agenda: 'You're a modern man:

you should be in touch with your emotions, tough and tender, romantic, vulnerable, close to your partner – a hunk with a heart.' So what does it mean to be a man today? Many men don't know and some don't care. But all men are affected by changing expectations, whether or not they can identify them. Only someone living in total isolation could fail to be affected by contemporary changes in the world of work, family, leisure and entertainment.

So what is millennium man going to be like: confused, uncertain, and lonely?; or liberated, sensitive and strong? Who knows.

We can be sure society's understanding of masculinity is changing. Some changes are for the better, some are not. What really is crucial for the church, though, is our response to these changes. Where are we going to turn to get a healthy and helpful model for men today?

There is a great opportunity for the Church

to enter the debate. These issues and how we respond to them have direct repercussions on how the Church relates to men today. My hunch is that we will need to be rooted in Jesus, and not in the stereotypes of what it means to be a man. We will need to relate well to contemporary society, and not remain in our spiritual ghettos. We will need to develop appropriate outreach strategies and expressions of Church life for modern men, not just rely on what has served us well in the past. Above all we will need to invite people to encounter Jesus, the one man who is the perfect man-tor. Are we ready to face 'Men: the challenge of change'?

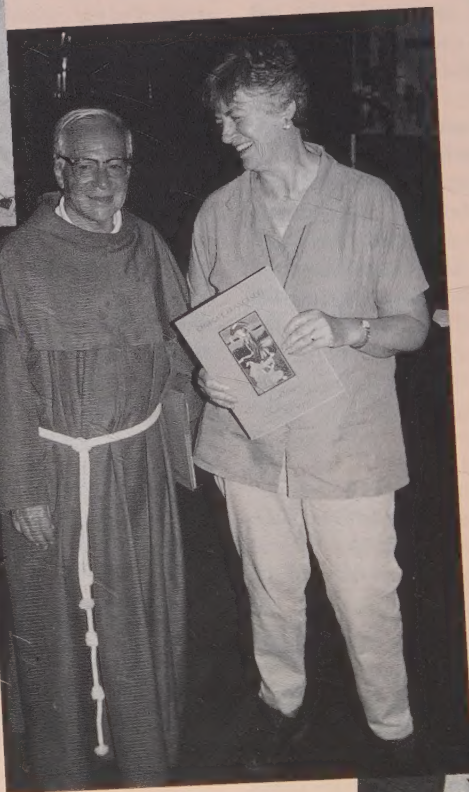
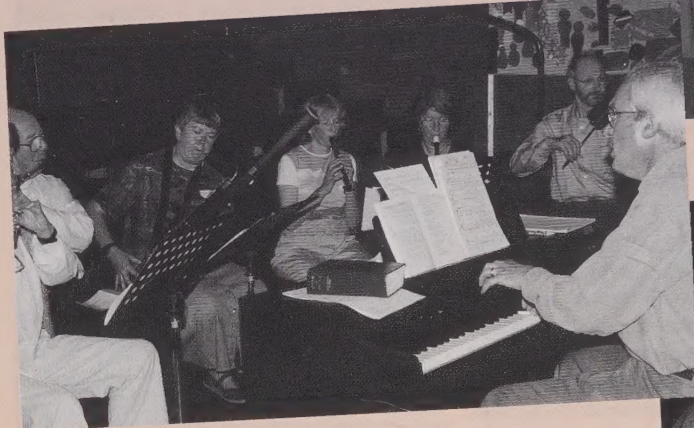
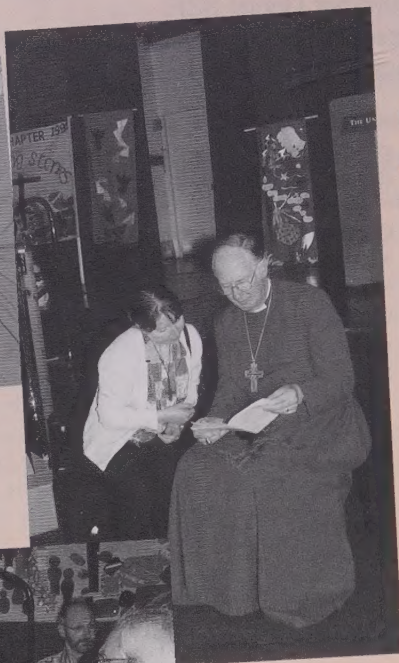
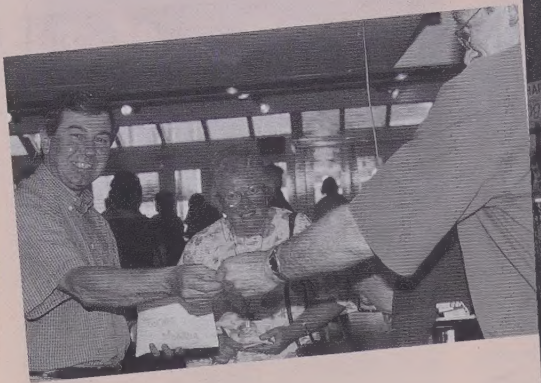
As Roy McCloughry says, 'If the Church is to reach men, as it can and it must, then it must confront the issue of masculinity.' ■

James Lawrence

James is Director of Evangelism Projects for the Church Pastoral Aid Society.

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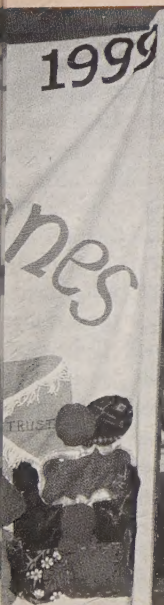
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Photographs by Anthony Hillard TSSF,
Geoffrey Richardson TSSF
& Joyce Yarrow CSF

Community Routes



Joyce Yarrow CSF

Sister Christine James CSF, newly life-professed

◆◆ Springboard

Franciscans were involved in a very worthwhile collaboration in mission in a parish recently. After a year or so of shared planning, **Desmond Alban, Beverley and David Furniss TSSF** first led a preparation weekend for the Mission, in the parish of S John's South Bank, Middlesbrough. The Mission Week itself, in April, was then led by Revd **Stephen Cottrell** of *Springboard*, the Archbishops' initiative for evangelism. The team he led included the three Franciscans, local people and visiting team members, several of whom had first been part of a Home Team for a mission in their own parish. The collaboration was a very positive experience that made an impact on the life of both the church itself and the Urban Priority Area in which it is set. The Franciscans will return in October for a weekend to encourage further the ongoing growth and mission of that church, with Father Stephen and Desmond Alban visiting at other times too. There was much to learn from how other evangelists approach this vital work, but most encouraging of all was seeing people welcome the gospel and respond to it's message. Alnmouth Friary itself also played it's part, as a venue for early planning, reflection and team building.

◆◆ Franciscan First?

The church claiming to be the oldest Franciscan church in this country (which would make it older than Greyfriars in Canterbury) is in Lincoln. **Paschal** recently presided at the eucharist there, possibly the first Franciscan to do so since the Reformation, with **Harry**, local TSSF and Roman Catholics also involved in the event.

◆◆ Francis, lost and found

Sister Helen Julian writes:

'I've always said hello to him as I come across the road,' said one sister, 'I'm really going to miss him.' The statue of Francis with arms outstretched had stood at the foot of the convent steps at Compton since we moved from Dalston, where he was in the cloister garden. In November last year he disappeared, presumed stolen. We reported his loss to the police, and told all our local visitors and guests, hoping that someone might spot him. But as the months went on, we began to accept that he was gone for good.

Then, in April, one of our regular celebrants rang up. 'Have you lost a statue of Francis?' 'Yes!' 'Well, I think I've found him.' Two days later he turned up, opened the boot of his car, and put Francis back in his usual place. He had been damaged during his time away, losing his hands, and had been found just in time, in a trailer on his way to the tip. Now we hope to be able to afford to have him restored, so that he can once again greet sisters, and visitors to the house.

◆◆ Crossing Offa's Dyke

Nathanael has moved to Alnmouth after twenty-seven years of ministry in Wales. Now 70, he reflects on a quarter of a century of SSF's presence 'the other side of Offa's Dyke'.

When, at the request of the SSF Chapter, I moved from Alnmouth to begin new work for the Society, I didn't think that I would be in the Principality of Wales for such a long period of time. I was following in the footsteps of earlier SSF brethren, who ran hostels in Wales in the 1930's at Brecon and Blaenau Ffestiniog. The SSF house in Llanrhôs – namely *Ty'r Brodyr* – enabled SSF to serve the Church in Wales for eleven years. Even after its closure in 1983, I was asked by the SSF Chapter to stay on in Wales, find somewhere to live, and continue our ministry. The Bishops invited me to move to Swansea and I remained there for four years. So, in order to be attached to a community house, I then moved to Glasshampton. For the next seven years, I crossed and recrossed Offa's Dyke to continue work in the Principality. As I had been ordained in the Church in Wales and served a curacy, I then felt it right to offer my last few years of ministry as a parish priest. So in 1995 I moved into the Rectoral Benefice of Dolgellau where, for the past

three years and eight months, I have served as an assistant Priest.

It has been a rewarding experience in many ways, and a privilege and pleasure to be a Franciscan presence in Wales, where the Third Order continues to grow.

One hopes and prays that one day, and in God's good time, a First Order presence will once again serve the Church in Wales from the Welsh side of Offa's Dyke.

◆◆ A New Creation

The life-professed brothers of the European Province met again for the two days of their annual General Chapter at Hilfield Friary early in June. Along with some community business and the presentation and discussion of reports, the brethren enjoyed the company of **Michael Scott-Joynt**, the Bishop Protector, who also led a Bible Study on *A New Creation*, the theme of the Chapter.

Another highlight of the Chapter was the 1999 Franciscan Lecture, given this year by Bishop **Rowan Williams**. In his challenging talk on the subject of Poverty, the Bishop first described the practice of a lyric or romantic poverty in which one may renounce secular means for meeting one's needs, while yet 'expecting God to provide' and adequately meet these same needs. He then contrasted this 'dramatic or heroic poverty' - a 'performance of the ego' - with a poverty in which one was essentially powerless, unable to 'make things right'. Rather, one was 'living beyond the dramatic' in a truthful awareness of the 'ordinariness of life', and acting 'aptly' from within this honest 'attunement' to the real world.

Philippe Yates OFM was also a guest: he is vice-principal of the Franciscan Study Centre at Canterbury.

On the final day, the feast of Corpus Christi, **Angelo** presided at the eucharist, as it was the thirtieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

◆◆ Be praised, my Lord . . .

Brother Matthew writes:

When the Recreation Room at Hilfield Friary was recently renovated, our friends John and Kirsten Glazebrook suggested that a weaving be installed, not one 'off-the-peg' but one that was designed in consultation with the community and worked on together at the Friary.

The result now hangs there in four parts: its inspiration is Francis' Canticle of the Creatures. Reds, yellows and oranges predominate, giving a primæval sense of creation. Brother Sun is depicted on the first



Brother Nathanael SSF

life-giving energy. The last depicts lightning – power, strength and energy. From first to last, God is the same – the source of all being! The second weaving is of fish and flowing rivers. On the third weaving is Sister Moon. Running through all four are three stripes of blue and grey: layers of rock, the beginning of all life, the Holy Three.

Those who worked the tapestries felt that they had an experience of art as meditation, art as prayer. Thanks be to God!

◆◆ Birmingham SSF Update

Two years ago, SSF brothers moved from Gillott Road to pioneer a new ministry on an outer estate of Birmingham. There they occupied two flats. On the Tuesday in Holy Week the brothers moved out of St Damian's House to a flat above St Clare's House. This means they now have adjacent front doors and are on one site, instead of two flats on different parts of the Ley Hill Estate.

The new flat, with its new chapel, used for the first time at the Easter Vigil, was blessed and dedicated by Brother **Damian** on Thursday 15th April. The brothers were delighted that so many people came and joined in the celebrations, which included a barbecue. Over fifty people came for all or part of the time.

The brothers continue to work closely with the Barnardo's Project on the estate, and help out with various youth clubs on Sundays and Mondays. **Alan Michael** is a governor at one of the local schools and does some work at the local secondary school with youngsters with behavioural problems. He liaises with professional bodies who work in the area and is very active in supporting local families, most recently in connection with a murder on the estate. He is also involved in the setting up of a Summer Youth Project.

Three novices have now completed their

year's urban training: **Christopher** was attached to St Michael's, Bartley Green and also part of the Chaplaincy team at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, gaining experience in a number of different departments. **Oswin Paul** gave classroom support at Bellfield Infant & Junior Schools and had a Parish attachment at St Gabriel's, Weoley Castle. **Martin Philip** was a part-time Chaplain at Birmingham Prison and gave classroom support at Ley Hill Primary School, which is on the estate.

The brothers are grateful to local clergy who come and preside at the daily Eucharist, and also to parishioners, neighbours and friends who give generous support.

◆◆ Community of Communities

Brother Martin writes:

This hitherto annual event has now come to an end. It first came into being after the celebrations at Lincoln in 1983 which commemorated the ninth centenary of the birth of Gilbert of Sempringham, a Lincolnshire saint. He had been the only Englishman to found a new religious order in the middle ages.

At the time of this centenary, Oliver Fiennes was Dean of Lincoln. He and Brother Kenneth CGA worked out a plan enabling members of different religious orders (Anglican and Roman Catholic) to live together as a community during the summer months, sharing a common life and serving the Cathedral, both liturgically and pastorally.

The project continued year by year. Many sisters and brothers (including several from CSF and SSF) participated. However, the Cathedral Chapter has decided with regret that its resources must be employed in other ways and the Community of Communities now no longer exists.

◆◆ Round Up

Christine James made her profession in first vows on 8 July at Compton Durville . . . **Nicholas Alan** made his profession in first vows on 24 April at Glasshampton . . . **Sue** made her profession in first vows on 10 April and **Rowan Clare** on 24 July, both at Compton Durville.

Philip Bartholomew was ordained priest at Hilfield on 26 June.

In October, it is anticipated that five men will begin testing their vocation to the First Order, at Glasshampton.

Francis has returned to Australia after a year in the UK . . . **Jason Robert** has returned to the US Province, where he will become Novice Guardian, after a fruitful year living in the Edinburgh house . . . **Nan** has returned to the house at Brixton, and begun work at a local nursery school.

The following anticipate moving in September: **Augustine Thomas** and **David Alban** to Birmingham . . . **Carol** to

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Helen Julian has been appointed Sister-in-Charge at Compton Durville until Pentecost 2000.

Hugo, Philip, Nolan Tobias and **Peter Douglas** are on leave of absence . . . **Robert** has withdrawn from the noviciate . . . **Pat** has been secularised and released from membership of the First Order. ■



Spirituality in the congregation

by Graham Piper

I moved to Haywards Heath, West Sussex, over five years ago to take up the post of Team Vicar of the Church of the Ascension. The church had been built about thirty years before: it was a pre-fabricated building and was by then in a very poor state of repair. After a fair amount of consultation with architects and other professionals in the field, it became apparent that a bold approach was needed if the worshipping community was to continue its participation in God's mission to the part of the town it resided in.

I am pleased to say that last year we moved into our new building after four years of hard slog. It just so happened that the rather arduous task of rebuilding the external walls coincided with a desire to rebuild the life of faith in the worshipping community. We held a variety of meetings to determine the best way forward, the most productive of these being a 'Share the Vision' Sunday. Study groups were formed for the day, a shared lunch provided, and some searching questions to which to find answers. This was the start of a journey in faith and trust.

To start the 'Share the Vision' day, I used an illustration of an incident I had witnessed in church soon after coming to Haywards Heath. The congregation had a habit of arriving at church just seconds before the start of the service. Some regularly arrived late for the service. The old building had a side entrance and most of the people arriving late would sit in the seats directly opposite the door. In reality this meant the majority of the congregation! On one Sunday morning a woman with her baby in a pram arrived ten minutes late for the service. When the door opened everybody turned to see who had arrived so late. There was a look of fright on the woman's face as she discovered that the majority of people were seated on the chairs opposite the door and consequently there were no seats available into which she could discreetly sidle. So she started a journey which took her round the back of the church to the other side – the side very few ever reached. What made matters worse was that one of the wheels on the pram the woman was pushing developed an ear-piercing squeak as she made the journey to the other side! After the service, the woman left fairly promptly. I'm pleased to say that the new building has its entrance at the back and all the seating on both sides of the church is reasonably full on a Sunday; very rarely do people sit on their own.

The purpose of telling this story to the community was to highlight the fact that many members of the church journey alone. We seldom share our journey; and those who have a wish to do so never seem to be given the opportunity. We often leave new people to journey alone, like the woman in the story,

and then we wonder why they don't stay. So much of life is private, so much of faith seems to be private, too. There is still a common belief that a relationship with God is purely a private matter, not a thing to be discussed or shared. If the early Christians had taken this view we may never have heard of Jesus Christ!

As a result of our 'Share the Vision' Sunday, we decided to adopt the *Emmaus* programme of evangelism. This programme is based on the road to Emmaus narrative in the Gospel according to Luke, where Jesus draws alongside two of his disciples and accompanies them on their journey and helps them make sense of all the events they had witnessed. The model of evangelism used in the Emmaus material is that of accompanying. This vision for evangelism, nurture and growth has brought people together. Each new member of the church is accompanied on their journey so that dialogue takes place and no one journeys alone. There are ongoing growth groups, so that every member of the congregation takes part in discovering more about the Christian faith.

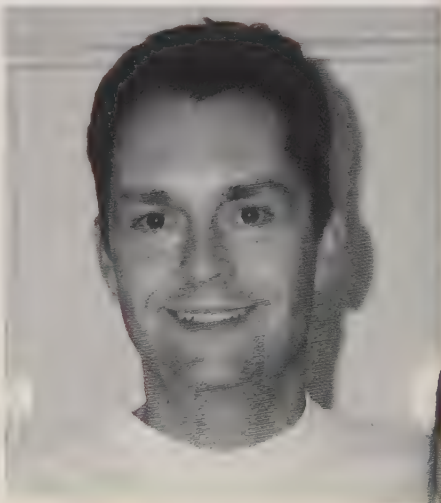
This has had a very positive effect on the spirituality of the parish. Dialogue, I believe, is at the heart of Christian spirituality – dialogue with God, with the world and with one another. Each and every person reflects theologically whether they be religious or not. We all search for meaning in the areas of our life where there is pain and joy, where there is hunger and thirst. It is in the depth of our being that we can recognise that God is in fact present in all that we encounter and experience.

Sometimes we need help to recognise this and to enter into dialogue with others can aid our understanding of a God who is present. Whatever the case, we need an environment which encourages our theological reflection. The *Emmaus* course has allowed people to enter into dialogue with the teachings of the Church, resulting in individuals being enabled to talk openly about their faith and spiritual life with one another. Many have shared their sense of the divine presence and have found help and encouragement to live in the light of a God who communicates

himself to us in Jesus Christ.

When I reflect on my own journey, I recognise that there have been many times when – through dialogue with others – I have come to know more about living in the light of God's presence. This was certainly true when, in my early twenties I joined SSF and, although I stayed a few years only, I discovered the value of community, prayer and silence. All three feature now in my life as a parish priest and, to be honest, I could not survive without them. The community of faith helps us interpret our encounter with God and sustains us on our pilgrimage. Prayer and silence allow us to be fed and nurtured by God. In prayer we become more aware of God's presence and the light that that brings. Spiritual direction has also played a significant part in my spiritual journey, both as a directee and as a director. Being offered, and offering the opportunity to reflect at a deeper level, has allowed growth to take place in the areas of life where I and others had given up hope.

In my experience, spirituality in the parish has been deepened and fed by encouraging an environment of openness and trust. We all need to be able to share doubts and express ourselves, knowing that we will be received in love and understanding. Over the past five years, people in the parish have discovered the value of meeting together, praying together and sharing in the richness of other people's faith stories. There has been an increase in parishioners seeking spiritual direction or the sacrament of reconciliation or in expressing a general desire to discover more about the Christian faith. As the parish priest, I too have been encouraged and fed by this growth. I have felt supported and prayed for. I would be the first to admit that we clergy need help in our endeavour to spread the good news of God's kingdom. A disciplined prayer life has been essential in my ministry, but my help has come through being accompanied by my spiritual director, other clergy friends and family, but also and significantly, by the very people I am here to serve. ■



Tristram SSF

Graham Piper, Annette his wife, and their three children recently moved to Bamber Bridge in the Blackburn Diocese, where Graham is now the Vicar.

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Book Reviews

Richard Blackford

Mirror of Perfection: A Cantata
Sony Classical CD, 1999, £15.99

The British composer Richard Blackford's personal encounter with the story of Saint Francis during a visit to Assisi in 1995 made a deep impression on him and his response was *Mirror of Perfection*, scored for two solo voices, chorus and orchestra. It is a work full of passion and beauty as well as intimacy, the whole conceived with an economy and simplicity of style deliberately evoking the spirit of Saint Francis.

Blackford's idiom in this piece is immediately accessible and firmly rooted in the tradition of British choral writing. He sets seven of the Canticles attributed to Saint Francis, beginning with the Cantic of the Creatures and ending with a sublime setting of the Cantic of Peace. The overall shape and balance of the work is very satisfying and well thought out. In the more intimate sections, which feature some poignant scoring for the chamber orchestra, the solo voices almost seem to be those of Francis and Clare, though I do not think consciously intended to be so by the composer.

I do find myself wondering whether Francis himself would have found it all a little over romantic. Perhaps he would, but I do think this is a fine work which is very well played and sung in the new recording by the composer.

Martin Lawes

Ivor Smith Cameron

The Church of Many Colours
All Saints', 100 Prince of Wales Drive,
London, SW11 4BD; 1998, £10

Those of us who have watched and admired the ministry of Ivor since his days (fifteen years of them) as a University Chaplain will have observed how he has increasingly owned the Indian part of his heritage. This book, published at Chennai in the land of his birth, includes eight pages of coloured photographs, illustrating his colourful life. When in 1995 he became a Chaplain to the Queen, some of his family asked if it would mean that he had to move into Buckingham Palace. But in fact, living in Battersea he has turned a perfectly ordinary modern parish church into something of a palace, or anyway a place of multi-cultural worship. The hospitable and courteous welcome, the inclusive atmosphere of the liturgy and the meal afterwards demonstrate a new way of being Church. Ivor has always been a prayerer, a pastor and a prophet. These addresses from his twenty years as Canon Missioner in the Diocese of Southwark show clearly these attributes: the deep and unipious spirituality, the respect and concern that individuals find their place in the ecumenical and international Church, and the prophet's unwearied demand that Christians should

relate to and live out commitment to the Gospel in their various situations. In particular his championing of the ethnic minorities has woken the Church of England both to the injustices of our inhospitality, and what we are missing by not being open to the immigrant's faith and ways of worship.

The addresses are succinct, accessible, varied and interesting and will be a tonic for those who will read one a day for the next forty-two days, or even for those who take them more gently.

Bernard SSF

Alec Gilmore

Aid Matters: A book of cries, questions and prayers

SCM Press, London, 1998, £9.99

This imaginative compilation is designed to meet demand for resource material on aid and development issues. It contains stories, prayers, Bible reflections, factual essays, and suggestions for prayer and action. It would be suitable for use by a parish discussion group, or would be of equal value to preachers and worship leaders looking for up-to-date material on a topic which can be difficult to present positively. The book is structured according to the Christian year, with linked themes (e.g. Christmas: travel and eco-tourism, mission and journey) but the material is not tied to a given liturgical context.

The philosophy behind the book is rooted in the importance of giving a human face to sterile 'issues' if we want our listeners to care enough to do something. It challenges our assumption that our responsibility for aid ends with financial donation; the reader is challenged to analyse what the charities we support actually do with our money, and

the effects of charitable aid and 'dependence culture' on emergent economies. New lines of enquiry are suggested on familiar topics (women, liberation theology, debt, literacy). Above all, the author's experience as a director of the charity 'Feed the Minds' leads him to stress the importance of information as a tool for power sharing. The book seeks to redress the balance between the aid-givers and the aid-receivers by enabling them to hear something more about each other's history, culture and circumstances. Literature itself, says the author, is a vital resource in developing and enlarging our world view, and the book accordingly opens up to us some of the 'literature of the struggle' with which it behoves us to become familiar. There can be no excuse after reading this book for taking refuge in the old easy fictions about the Third World. Our perceptions and failures to communicate accurately are offered a gentle but insistent challenge. Old assumptions about Biblical theology are given an exciting new slant with a Greek key word in each section (for example, Easter's *anastasis*, traditionally translated as simply 'resurrection', is given new life by linking it with communities and individuals being 'made to stand', brought to their feet, from which they can operate on equal terms.

The book is attractively produced and well laid out: the pages are dotted with boxes of concise information points on a given topic, and helpful quotes which might easily kick-start a sermon!

Altogether, this book is a rich and exciting resource. Once you have read it, you will no longer be satisfied with the 'quick fix' of charitable giving with which so many of us choose to salve our consciences.

Rowan Clare CSF

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Douglas Dales

Called to be Angels: An introduction to Anglo-Saxon Spirituality
Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1998, £5.99

Anglo-Saxon spirituality! Was, or is, there such a thing? We know a lot about Celtic spirituality, but were not the Anglo-Saxons an earth-bound, unspiritual lot of people? The answer, it seems, is 'no'.

This little book introduces us to a succession of people. First we meet Pope Gregory the Great, who is here seen laying a foundation for an English spirituality of gentleness and self-giving. Then Cuthbert, Caedmon, Bede, Boniface, Alcuin and Dunstan, with a good many others brought in alongside. A couple of women, Hild and Leoba, peep through the cracks, with a third, the Abbess Eadburga, just behind them. The book stresses that spirituality is that which passes from person to person in spiritual friendship.

Major themes are the spread of the faith through missionary work and Christian learning. These were brought to the English from Rome and from Iona, and then taken by the English to their cousins abroad. Gregory the Great (whose famous pun 'not Angles

Angels' is the source of the title) is given its due place as the inspirer of mission. But that which was received through Aidan and the Irish is also fully appreciated. Then we meet the unforgettable: Boniface, missionary in Germany, murdered as he read the books he had begged English nuns to send; Alcuin, in his splendid position as Chief Education Officer to the Frankish Emperor, homesick for his library back home in York; Dunstan, abbot, archbishop, statesman, musician and blacksmith! So many worth getting to know. Designed for individuals or groups, each chapter has first the story of the subject's life and background, then the author's reflections, a short passage from Scripture, questions for thought and discussion, and a prayer. The book has suggestions for further reading. But if you are stimulated by this book to want more – as you may well be – why not let it lead you to a rather larger new book by Sister Benedicta Ward called *High King of Heaven: aspects of early English spirituality* . . . and be convinced that there is such a thing!

Kate Tristram TSSF

A M Allchin

Resurrection's Children: Exploring the way towards God

The Archbishop of Wales' Lent Book 1999
Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1998, £6.99

This book is both scholarly and immensely readable, and can be read at many different levels. It is to be enjoyed by groups gathered for study and discussion, or read privately at home. It can also be used as an introduction and guide to further study of Welsh devotional literature through the centuries. At the conclusion of each chapter, there are ideas for days of pilgrimage or visits to the sanctuaries and places connected with the people mentioned in the text.

The journey begins with the work of William Williams (Williams Pontycelyn), the Welsh Methodist hymnwriter of the eighteenth century, who wrote 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer'. We enjoy the company of Mary Jones, Ann Griffiths and Ruth Evans on their travels to obtain the 'word' and read of far-reaching consequences of their various journeys which inspired Thomas Charles and the beginnings of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Waldo Williams, the Quaker poet and pacifist of our own century, inspires with the harvest of prayer and thought contained in his poetry; and rugged Gwenallt Jones, who trudged the roads of Wales during the time of the great depression. We read of his rejection of his childhood Methodism and of his social concerns with the poverty and deprivation of the working-class people of his country, and of his eventual return to Christian belief.

Guto'r Glyn was a different matter: he was the court bard from the fifteenth century who sang his songs and entertained Abbots and Princes, and was succoured by them. We are given a poignant glimpse of the old man moving towards the end of his earthly

journey and receiving care and hospitality at Valle Crucis Abbey. And we see a little of Guto's wonderful handling of words and his skill in socialising with his audience.

The twelfth-century poet Meilyr Brydydd brings us to the Isle of Expectation – Bardsey, 'a place of solitude' – 'Fair Mary's isle, pure isle of the pure, Resurrection's scene, to be in it is splendid.'

In reading this book, we will find great riches that will help us forward on our own personal journeys as the children of the Resurrection.

Gwenfryd Mary CSF

Penny Eckersley

Holding the Silences: A Nepal Notebook
Abbey Press, Glastonbury, 1998, £8.95

The mysteries of Tibet have captured the imagination of many people in the West in recent years. The soaring mountain ranges and the esoteric practices of Tibetan Buddhism have led to a romanticism that can obscure the true nature of Tibetan culture. It is therefore good to read a book that is a down-to-earth account of time spent with the Sherpa people in the mountains of Nepal close to the border with Tibet.

Penelope Eckersley TSSF is well known to many readers of *franciscan* as a counsellor and conductor of retreats. Her book is the journal of a month spent on retreat in the Himalayas, staying at a small Buddhist temple introduced to her by an English friend, a devotee of Tibetan Buddhism.

As a description of the sights and sounds, or rather silences, of the Himalayas, the writing is often moving and brings the mountains vividly to life. However, the descriptions of the practice and belief of the Buddhists with whom she stayed are often superficial and mostly negative. Penelope herself admits that she did little in the way of preparation for the trip and took with her only the Authorized Version of the Bible and a copy of the (Hindu) Upanishads. The retreat itself being largely silent, and not being guided by a Buddhist conductor, it is difficult to know how a clear understanding of Buddhism could have been reached. As she herself says, 'I longed to find the common ground, the shared experience, but somehow we never met at the spiritual level, only at the practical.' At least the book is honest enough to acknowledge that dialogue with another culture and faith tradition does not always lead to enlightenment!

Nicholas Alan SSF

Brother Ramon SSF
The Flame of Sacred Love
BRF, London, 1999, £6.99

Rarely have I read a book that has stimulated and refreshed me as much as this one (and interestingly, other books which have, like Michael Mayne's *Sunrise of Wonder*, are all quoted from in this book).

I suspect that the only reason that a Methodist Minister was invited to write this review is that the title of the book – and indeed the framework of it – is based on one

of Charles Wesley's hymns. But there is nothing exclusively Methodist about it. As I read the book, I made notes and I found there words like 'catholic and evangelical', 'prayerful and pragmatic', 'irenic and ecumenical' (and an ecumenism that embraces other faiths). Then I came to a passage which encapsulated my feelings: 'I am no longer able to categorise my theological stance, though I am happy to settle for catholic/evangelical, with an openness to intellectual freedom, and an increasing participation in global spirituality, which is widening my horizons to take in the whole of our world and the whole created order.' Shades of Wesley's sermon on the Catholic Spirit!

Brother Ramon is clearly immersed in a wide range of sources and traditions – biblical, patristic, medieval, as well as modern – and he presents his material in fresh and vivid ways.

In my notes I also wrote down the question: for whom is the author writing? My guess is that anyone who wishes to deepen their faith and explore spirituality will profit from reading this book. I commend it for personal reading and private devotional exercises. It would also be an admirable book for a house group to explore. It is a challenge to the prosaic, tired life of many of us.

Barrie Heafford
Minister, Wesley Church, Cambridge

Betty Jane Bailey & Alison Hilliard
Living Stones Pilgrimage
Cassell plc, London, 1998, £9.99

Written primarily for pilgrims to Israel and Palestine, this book will provide inspiration and useful information for all who have an interest in the Holy Land. It is neither another guidebook nor yet a history of the land and its ancient stones; there are plenty of such books already. Rather it is a book about the living stones, namely the Christian people who live there.

There are thirteen major Christian communions in Jerusalem. This book gives a scholarly and easily-readable introduction to their respective histories and varying traditions, with notes on their styles of liturgy and the languages in which the worship is performed, together with useful information about times of services. It is noted that in some churches the services can last for up to four hours, though there is no expectation that everyone should stay throughout. We are encouraged to 'lose the quest to know and understand everything' but to catch the atmosphere and simply reflect and meditate.

The number of Christians there is tiny: to be an indigenous Christian is not easy and many feel threatened and unwanted. They find it frustrating when pilgrims show no interest in those whose continuous witness save the buildings from becoming mere museums.

The wealth of information in this book makes it a valuable manual for the traveller but also a book which we can all enjoy.

Martin SSF

Sister Gabriel CSF, RIP

A Tribute, by Sister Gwenfryd Mary CSF

My first meeting with Gabriel was when she was the Guest Sister at Compton Durville in the sixties. I was an 'instant hit' because of my fondness for caraway-seed cake! She was an excellent Guest Sister - a work which enabled her to use her vast social skills and gifts of caring and compassion to good advantage. A good conversationalist, her knowledge of subjects like spirituality, prayer, English literature and modern poetry was immense. Several of us working at Compton were introduced to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and in no time we were firmly addicted: some of us remain so to this day!

From Compton Durville she went to the parish of St Francis, Bridgwater. Here again she was able to exercise her gifts with people in ministry. A few years at the brothers' house, Llanrhôs, North Wales followed that. Again, Gabriel enjoyed an active ministry of caring for groups and individuals and of giving hospitality to all in need. Here too, she discovered her culinary skills. This was the place where we both had our first contact with the 'living tradition' of the eremitical life. We met some of the Fairacres sisters who were living the solitary life at the extreme end of the Llyn peninsula. From these and other contacts she realised her own



Joyce Yarrow CSF

Sister Gabriel CSF

The Desert Fathers spoke of the hermit's life as 'enforced idleness for the sake of God', and I think this is particularly true in a community like ours, where sisters and brothers are busy with ministries which take them to a variety of places to preach, teach and counsel. The hermit, in contrast, is physically static - concentrating energy in one location - in gardening, doing manual work of various kinds, writing and, of course, in prayer and just 'being'.

Hermits are a little like a group of students in a life-drawing class at an art college who sit in a circle around the subject of their drawing. Thus each person has a different view from that of their neighbour - but it is of the same subject. Each hermit has a different view-point from which they 'see' God, and each response to that is unique and personal.

Gabriel was about seventy years of age when she began to live the solitary life. By then her eyesight was already very poor which meant that some degree of support and help from her sisters was essential in order for her to live alone safely. She did this with great courage and humour, even though at times she stretched the patience of her sisters and other friends around Compton Durville! During her last years increasing physical frailty never daunted her from attempting the impossible. However, her mind was lucid and enquiring right to the end and she was able to appreciate good literature and spiritual books of great depth. Sisters and local friends would go to the hermitage in order to read to her, and she was always appreciative.

'A recluse is one who, removing their abode from the sight of the world, and looking beyond, has only one demand in

prayer - the desire of the world to be', that was how St Isaac the Syrian put it. And I see these words as being very applicable to Gabriel. She was not afraid of death, and often spoke of the Lord whom she loved and longed to be with. Her vision was concentrated on that 'desire of the world to be'. We rejoice with her in her entrance into the joy of the Lord, and give thanks for all she shared with her brothers and sisters in her earthly life. ■

*Sister Gabriel CSF
died suddenly on 10 March
1999 at St Francis House
Birmingham and her ashes
were interred at Compton
Durville. She was aged
eighty-six years and was in
the thirty-seventh year of
profession in vows.
May she rest in peace and
rise in glory.*

calling. This was tested out over a long period of time in various places. Eventually her permanent hermitage was the converted cricket pavilion at Compton Durville, from 1982. In mid December 1998 she moved to St Francis House, Birmingham, where she died.

She was a person of great warmth and friendliness and had a wonderful sense of humour as well as great compassion for the suffering of the world. During her years in community she had made numerous contacts with a wide variety of people and was able to maintain and nurture these by letter, but latterly by telephone when her sight became worse and she was almost totally blind. She was meticulous in her prayer for them.

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All editorial correspondence should be addressed to:

franciscan Editor

Hilfield Friary

DORCHESTER Dorset

DT2 7BE UK

or E-Mail:

tristam@ssf.orders.anglican.org

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